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## *What Does It Mean to Me?*

FOR centuries librarians lived a subterranean existence, isolated, detached from all the great movements going on in the world, almost in a state of revery. In 1876 they realized that they were a profession and organized the American Library Association. During the world war, they made their conscious professional spirit the motive power which created and carried out successfully a comprehensive library service to the enlisted men in the Army and Navy of the United States. The A. L. A. is the embodiment of this conscious professional spirit. There is not a group of scientists, a learned profession, nor a line of business that does not have its national organization which is known and supported from Portland, Maine, to Los Angeles, California, and from Duluth to New Orleans.

There is a threefold reason, therefore, why Librarians should have a strong national Association for they combine and represent all three interests, the scientific, the professional, and the business. Let there be as many local and special organizations as you please, but unless we have one strong national organization we shall fail to exert the influence in the nation which it is now our right and duty to exert.

It has been iterated and reiterated until it has become worse than trite that every librarian should join the A. L. A. and one hears all too frequently the response "Why should I join the A. L. A.? What has the A. L. A. done for me?"

My own experience gives an excellent answer to both questions. I joined the A. L. A. from the simplest of motives, a desire to meet men and women of my own profession and to find out what others were thinking and doing. At first my progress was slow but this was because of lack of acquaintanceship. Now, however, I realize that I got out of the Association a thousandfold what I brought to it. I like to believe that the little I have contributed has aided in a like result to other members of the Association. If this is so it can only be because it has been added to the contributions of a thousand others made possible by the American Library Association.

To the younger members of the profession, to all who are not members of the A. L. A. I would say join at once. Join not merely by paying the initiation fee and dues but join with heart and soul. There is nothing you can do, as a first step, which will so advance the profession.

Libraries as such, and other institutions interested in library advancement, such as schools, colleges, and learned societies which depend upon libraries for the preservation and diffusion of the results of their labors, should subscribe to institutional membership, and thus secure the information and service now available at headquarters. This service is advisory to those needing assistance. It covers the duties of an employment bureau, and offers a series of publications of the greatest professional interest. To these should be added, the indirect service of fostering a high professional standard.

H. H. B. MEYER,  
*First Vice-President.*